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OUTLAWS of the WEST

DRAW FAST AND SURE, LAWMAN, BUT REMEMBER, KID MONTANA MAY BE THE...

"WRONG MAN"

A VERDICT OF "GUILTY"! A CONFESSED THIEF, LEO WARREN LIVES OUT HIS LAST DAYS IN CUSTODY...

"THE HANGMAN'S WAITING"

KID MONTANA·GUNFIGHTER

THE WRONG MAN

A MOVING GUNFIGHTER... AN AIMLESS WANDERER... KID MONTANA PASSES THROUGH MANY TOWNS... SEARCHING PERHAPS FOR A PLACE TO SETTLE DOWN... BUT FINDING ONLY TROUBLE! NOW HE IS RIDING THROUGH THE BADLANDS... *ONLY SECONDS AWAY FROM INVOLVEMENT!*

THIS MAY BE NONE OF MY BUSINESS, BUT IT SURE SOUNDED LIKE SOMEONE'S UP TO NO GOOD!
MAYBE I CAN SET THINGS RIGHT! BETTER HAVE A LOOK!

OUTLAWS OF THE WEST

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BUT BEHIND THE RIDGE...HELP COMES TOO LATE!

DEAD! SHOT IN THE BACK! HE WASN'T EVEN ARMED! HE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE!

HEY! THAT KILLER IS STILL AROUND! HE'S HIDING UP IN THOSE ROCKS!

GOT TO GRAB ME SOME COVER--FAST!

HE SURE DOESN'T WANT TO LEAVE ANY WITNESSES! PROBABLY THINKS I SAW THE WHOLE THING! CAN'T SEE HIM FROM HERE! HE'S TOO WELL HIDDEN.* GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT HIM OUT!

HE WAITS... READY TO SHOOT AT THE FIRST THING THAT MOVES!

HOOFBEATS! HE'S GIVEN UP ON ME... MAKING A BREAK FOR IT!

HE SLIPPED RIGHT PAST ME! HIS HORSE MUST'VE BEEN BEHIND THOSE ROCKS!

BUT HE'S NOT GOING TO GET AWAY SO EASY! NOT IF I CAN HELP IT! MOVE, BOY!

ANYONE WHO'D SHOOT A MAN IN THE BACK OUGHT TO BE CHASED DOWN LIKE A RATTLER!

AH! THERE HE IS! THIS IS MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF HIM! HASN'T GOT MUCH OF A LEAD! I SHOULD BE ABLE TO CLOSE THE GAP!

URGING HIS MOUNT ON, KID MONTANA STEADILY CLOSES IN!

HE STILL HASN'T SPOTTED ME! HASN'T EVEN THOUGHT TO LOOK BEHIND HIM! *NOW, BOY, NOW! LET'S TAKE HIM! SCRATCH DUST!*

THEN, A HOOF CATCHES IN A CHUCK HOLE... AND SUDDEN DISASTER BECOMES A GRIM REALITY ...*THAT ENDS IN UNCONSCIOUSNESS!*

HOURS PASS... AND AS AWARENESS SLOWLY RETURNS, KID MONTANA IS SUBJECT TO A RUDE AWAKENING!

GIT ON YER FEET, MISTER... *NOW!*

WHA? OH, YOU'RE A LAWMAN! GOOD! THERE'S SOMETHING YOU OUGHT TO KNOW!

DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME MISTER! *I KNOW THAT YOU'RE A WORTHLESS KILLER!*

WAIT A MINUTE! WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT? *I DIDN'T KILL ANYBODY!*

SHUT UP! YOU MIGHTA GOT AWAY WITH IT, IF YER HORSE HADN'T THROWN YUH! BUT NOW WE GOT YOU DEAD TO RIGHTS!

NO... LISTEN TO ME! YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE! I DIDN'T ...*UNNNN!*

WE KNOW WHAT YUH DONE, YOU FILTHY COWARD! SHOT A MAN IN THE BACK, WITHOUT GIVIN' HIM A CHANCE!

EASE OFF LAWSON! BEIN' A MEMBER OF THE POSSE DON'T MEAN YOU CAN PUSH MY PRISONERS AROUND!

OKAY, OKAY! SO I GOT A BIT RILED! BUT I SAY WE OUGHT TO STRING HIM UP HERE AN' NOW ...AN' BE DONE WITH IT!

THAT LAWSON CHARACTER! HE'S WEARING THE SAME KIND OF JACKET THE REAL KILLER HAD ON! MAYBE HE'S JUST TALKING BIG *TO COVER HIS OWN GUILT!*

I CAN EXPLAIN THIS WHOLE THING, SHERIFF...IF YOU'LL JUST LISTEN!

NO TIME, MISTER! THE WAY THIS POSSE IS TALKING, I'LL BE LUCKY TUH GIT YUH TO TOWN ALIVE! GET MOUNTED!

THE SHERIFF'S NERVOUS ABOUT HAVING A LYNCH MOB ON HIS HANDS...AND HE'S NOT PAYING TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO ME! THAT'S ALL THE EDGE I NEED! GOT TO MAKE A MOVE!

THEN, THE GUNFIGHTER MAKES A SUDDEN LEAP FOR HIS MOUNT... AND ALL IS CONFUSION!

NOW, BOY, NOW! LET'S CUT OUT! SCRATCH DUST!

RIDING LIKE THE WIND, MONTANA SOMEHOW GUIDES HIS MOUNT AWAY FROM THE HOSTILE POSSE!

HEY, HE'S GETTIN' AWAY! STOP HIM! START SHOOTIN'! CUT 'IM DOWN!

GIT MOUNTED! WE CAN'T LET HIM GIT TOO MUCH OF A LEAD!

CONTINUED AFTER FOLLOWING PAGE

THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND ME! I'VE GOT TO LOSE THEM SOMEHOW! THE ROCKS ON THE HIGH GROUND OUGHT TO GIVE ME COVER! GOT TO CHANCE IT!

WE LOST HIM! HE MUSTA TURNED OFF THE TRAIL SOMEWHERE! NO SENSE IN TRYIN' TUH BACK-TRACK! ALL WE CAN DO IS SEND WORD TO THE SHERIFFS IN THE SURROUNDIN' TOWNS!

THAT DID IT! BUT I'VE GOT TO PROVE TO THAT SHERIFF THAT I'M INNOCENT! MY REP'S BAD ENOUGH AS IT IS!

BESIDES, I WANT TO SEE TO IT THAT THE REAL KILLER GETS WHAT'S COMING TO HIM!

LAWSON'S GOT TO BE THE ONE! THAT JACKET, AND THE WAY HE TRIED TO SHUT ME UP! EVERY-THING FITS! BUT HOW DO I *PROVE* IT? HMM... MAYBE IF I MET HIM FACE TO FACE, HE'D BLURT OUT THE TRUTH! IT'S WORTH A TRY!

THE ONLY TOWN IN THE AREA WAS A PLACE CALLED RILEY JUNCTION... THE POSSE ***MUST*** HAVE COME FROM THAT TOWN...AND THAT NIGHT, KID MONTANA SLIPS UNNOTICED DOWN THROUGH THE BACK ALLEYS!

THIS SURE IS A STRANGE ONE! A MAN GETS KILLED, AND I GET BLAMED FOR HIS DEATH, ONLY BECAUSE I TRIED TO... *HEY WAIT! THERE'S LAWSON!*

HE'S HEADING FOR THE SALOON! CAN'T VERY WELL FOLLOW HIM IN THERE! GUESS I'D BETTER FIND A PLACE TO HIDE, AND WAIT UNTIL HE COMES OUT!

MORE THAN AN HOUR PASSES AS KID MONTANA WAITS!

THERE GOES THE SHERIFF! IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S HEADING TOWARD THE SALOON, TOO! HE'S A GOOD MAN, BUT HE COULD SURE USE A GOOD POSSE!

THEN, FINALLY... RESULTS!

AH, THERE'S THE KILLER NOW! HE'S HEADING FOR THAT ALLEY! GOOD! I CAN CUT AROUND AND MEET HIM THERE... FACE TO FACE!

AND A FEW SECONDS LATER, KID MONTANA REACHES HIS DESTINATION!

MISTER, I WANT A WORD WITH YOU... AND THEN WE'LL *BOTH* HAVE A WORD WITH THE SHERIFF!

WHA? YOU! SO YOU FOUND ME AGAIN, EH?

KID MONTANA STARES IN DISBELIEF AT THE FIGURE BEFORE HIM! *NO, IT ISN'T LAWSON, BUT IT IS THE KILLER!*

YOU... YOU'RE... YOU'RE...

...THE MAN WHO KILLED THE JACKSON HOMBRE! YEH, THAT'S ME! AS IF YOU DIDN'T ALREADY KNOW!

I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU APART, MISTER!

NOT WHILE I'M HOLDING THIS! FOLKS THINK THAT YORE THE ONE THAT DID THE KILLING! SO ONCE I SHOOT YOU, THIS WHOLE THING'LL BE OVER ...AN I'LL BE A HERO

SLOWLY, THE KILLER EASES BACK ON THE TRIGGER... BUT THEN A SUDDEN SOUND DISTRACTS HIM!

WHAT WAS THAT? SOMEONE'S LISTENING!

NOW'S MY CHANCE! GOT TO MAKE IT GOOD!

AND, EVEN AS THE KILLER PAUSES MOMENTARILY, TO SEARCH OUT THE INTRUDER, KID MONTANA MOVES!

A GIRL! SHE WAS STANDING IN A DOORWAY! NOW SHE'S RUNNING...*HEY!*

WONDER HOW LONG SHE WAS THERE! COULD BE SHE OVERHEARD OUR WHOLE CONVERSATION! AND THAT WOULD...*UNNNNN!*

WOW! I CAUGHT THE FULL FORCE OF THAT ONE! GOT TO CONCENTRATE ON ONE THING AT A TIME! CAN'T LET THIS KILLER TAKE ME!

HE'S STRONG...AND HE KNOWS HOW TO HANDLE HIMSELF! THIS ISN'T GOING TO BE AN EASY BRAWL! MIGHT AS WELL GET INTO IT!

COME AHEAD, KILLER! I CAN TAKE ALL YOU CAN DISH OUT, AND THEN SOME!

WE'LL SEE MISTER! I AIN'T NEVER BEEN BEAT BEFORE, WITH GUNS OR FISTS!

SO, WITH EACH FIGHTER EQUALLY MATCHED, A TREMENDOUS BATTLE BREAKS LOOSE!

UNNN! WHEW! CAN'T HOPE TO BEAT THIS KILLER WITH JUST MUSCLE ALONE! I'VE GOT TO OUT-THINK HIM!

I CAN MOVE A BIT FASTER THAN HE CAN! MAYBE I CAN USE THAT TO MY ADVANTAGE! GOT TO TRY ANYTHING AT THIS POINT!

YES! I THINK I'VE GOT HIM! HE'S STARTING TO WEAR DOWN! I'VE GOT TO KEEP PRESSING HIM ...KEEP HIM OFF BALANCE!

SUDDENLY, THE KILLER MAKES A DESPERATE GRAB FOR HIS FALLEN GUN!

OKAY, MISTER... OKAY! MAYBE YORE FASTER THAN I AM... BUT LET'S SEE HOW YOU DODGE A BULLET!

DON'T BE A FOOL! PUT THAT AWAY, BEFORE YOU FORCE ME TO USE MY OWN GUN!

I'M CALLIN' YOU, MISTER! MAKE YER PLAY! YOU'VE GOT ONE SECOND TUH LIVE!

TWO GUNS FIRE...ONE BULLET WHIZZES PAST MONTANA...*WHILE THE OTHER ENDS A KILLER'S LIFE!*

BUT THE SOUNDS OF GUNPLAY HAVE HARDLY GONE UNNOTICED!

THE SHERIFF...LAWSON...AND THE OTHERS, HEADED THIS WAY! I'D BETTER VAMOOSE FAST!

LOOK! THERE HE GOES! IT'S THAT OWLHOOT! THE ONE WHO KILLED JACKSON!

YEH! AND NOW HE'S FINISHED FRED NARKO! LET'S GET AFTER HIM... *AN' STRING HIM UP!*

SIMMER DOWN, LAWSON! I'M NOT ABOUT TO LET THIS TOWN BE RUN BY MOB RULE! IF YOU OPEN YORE MOUTH AGAIN YOU'LL WIND UP IN A CELL!

WAIT! ALL OF YOU! YOU'VE GOT TO LISTEN TO ME! YOU'RE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE!

THE GIRL'S TALKING TO THEM! SHE MUST BE TELLING THEM THAT I'M INNOCENT AND THAT NARKO WAS THE KILLER! BUT JUST IN CASE SHE ISN'T, I'M GOING TO GRAB SOME DISTANCE!

SO, ONCE AGAIN, THE GUNFIGHTER CALLED KID MONTANA HEADS HIS MOUNT TOWARD THE HORIZON, AND TO THE DESTINY THAT AWAITS HIM!

PAM

END

THE ANTIQUE MIRROR

His full name was John Henry Holliday but as long as there are stories and legends alive of the old West; he will be remembered as Doc Holliday.

One thing has puzzled writers on the old West for years. A careful examination of the career of Doc Holliday has shown that, for some reason, when he seemed to come into conflict with the law, something strange would always happen. Either the law would look the other way or act as though to condone what he did.

We now know that during this period of time he was a detective on the staff of the famous Rocky Mountain Detective Association, which was headed by General D.J. Cook. And at the same time he was a kind of secret agent for the railroads and stage companies. Thus he was working hand-in-hand with the law authorities all the time

This particular story concerns his old friend, Jim Galler. Jim came to see him in Denver with a complaint and a request.

"The fellows in Leadville have raised a kitty of three thousand dollars. If you need more money, we will get it for you. I run the Big Dollar Saloon. There are five other places like mine in town. Gambling is legal, so we attract a lot of people with money from the surrounding areas. Especially the cowboys.

"This fellow who calls himself Dave Perkins has set up a sort of protective association. First he charged us only a few dollars a month to prevent trouble. Now he is getting greedy. We figure we can never satisfy him. So we want to hire you to straighten things out."

"I'll take the assignment," smiled Doc Holliday "Provided you let me work things out in my own way and give me 100% cooperation."

"It's a deal," was the reply. "Here's the money"

It was a week later that Dave Perkins walked into the private office of Jim Galler to get his weekly protection money. But in place of Jim at the desk was a face that was familiar

"I'm looking for Jim," explained Dave Perkins 'Have some private business to do with him Know where he is?'

"Left town on the three o'clock stage," was the unexpected reply. "I bought this place from him. Now whatever it was you had with him, you just tell me"

The man standing in front of the desk knew that, if it came to a shooting showdown with Doc, he would be the loser. He thought carefully and then explained the "friendly arrangement" which he had. Doc Holliday laughed.

"Anyone trying anything in my place either gets a dose of lead poisoning or something unexpected. I can take care of any problem. So just go your way."

It wasn't as simple as that. Dave Perkins knew that once word got around town that Doc Holliday had bested him, he was finished. So he sent for his two best men, told them to get into a fight in the place, and wreck it But no shooting—that would not give Doc a chance to unload his guns.

And that night it seemed Doc had vanished! They got into a fight and wrecked the mirrors and the bar. When they left, they found Doc and an angered sheriff waiting for them.

"You are under arrest," said the sheriff. "Taking you to jail."

This had been anticipated and the next morning Dave Perkins came with $150 to bail them out. He faced Doc who explained the situation to him.

"There's a law in this state that when men fight and damage property, they are responsible for it, or go to jail until the bill is paid. Or they can work off the money in the state penitentiary I have here a bill of sale from Mr. Thomas Zwerish of Boston for an antique mirror he sold me and which those men destroyed. It amounts to $25,000 plus $2,000 for other damages. Pay that or they rot in jail"

The two imprisoned men had been informed of the situation. They spoke their mind to Dave Perkins:

"Get us out of here or we tell everything!"

In the end, Dave Perkins had to make a deal with Doc. He agreed to leave town, pay back all the money he had collected from the other men, and pay a reasonable sum for the damages. And then Jim took back his place again.

THE CIRCUS HAS COME TO THREE FORKS! IT ISN'T MUCH OF A CIRCUS...A BROKEN-DOWN TROUPE ON ITS LAST LEGS, NOW PLAYING THE SMALLER WESTERN TOWNS...BUT AMONG ALL THE POOR ATTEMPTS AT JUGGLING AND TUMBLING, AT TIGHT-WIRE WALKING AND WHAT-HAVE-YOU, ONE ACT STANDS OUT...ONE ACT IS WELL PERFORMED! AND THIS IS THE ACT PUT ON BY VANCE CURTIS, THE...

SHARPSHOOTER

BLAM BAM BLAM BAM BLAM

Y'KNOW, LEWT... THIS MAY BE JES' THE GUY WE *NEED*...FOR THE LITTLE JOB WE WERE PLANNING!

HEY, YEH! BUT DO YUH THINK WE CAN GIT HIM TUH DO IT??

BLAM BLAM

BLAM

SURE, IF WE PAY 'IM ENOUGH!

THIS CIRCUS AIN'T IN TOO GOOD SHAPE! *THEY* CAN'T BE PAYIN' 'IM MUCH! SO HE PROBABLY NEEDS THE DOUGH!

C'MON! LOOKS LIKE HIS ACT'S JES' ABOUT OVER! LET'S HEAD BACK TUH HIS WAGON AND MAKE 'IM THE OFFER!

NICHOLAS ALASCIA

B-1097

YES, VANCE CURTIS NEEDS THE DOUGH, BUT...

A SHOOT-OUT WITH THE SHERIFF?! YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDIN'! I'M A CIRCUS PERFORMER, NOT A HIRED GUN!

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, ANYWAY? WHY D'YUH WANT THE SHERIFF SHOT?

NEVER MIND THAT! LISTEN, WE'LL MAKE IT *WELL* WORTH YOUR WHILE! HOW DOES A HUNDRED BUCKS SOUND?

YORE WASTIN' YER TIME, BOYS! I'M NOT GONNA SHOOT IT OUT WITH SOMEONE I DON'T EVEN KNOW... NOT FOR ANY PRICE!

OH NO? WHAT IF I MAKE IT AN EVEN THOUSAND?

STILL NO DEAL!

IT IS SAID THAT EVERY MAN HAS HIS PRICE. AND, BE THIS TRUE OR NOT, DUKE KEEPS ON TALKING UNTIL AT LAST HE "CONVINCES" THE SHARPSHOOTER

FIVE THOUSAND?? YOU CRAZY, DUKE? WE AIN'T GOT *CLOSE* TUH THAT MUCH MONEY!

DON'T FRET, FRIEND! I AIN'T AIMIN' TUH PAY 'IM! I'VE DECIDED THAT IT'D BE BETTER IF THIS GUNMAN DOESN'T LIVE TUH TELL ANYONE WHO HIRED HIM! CUZ, IF HE DID, SOMEONE MIGHT JEST FIGURE OUT *WHY* WE HAD 'IM KILL THE SHERIFF!

SO *THAT'S* WHY YUH TOLD 'IM WE'D PAY 'IM OFF AT THE OLD CRENSHAW BARN! IT'S THE PERFECT PLACE TO DO SOMEONE IN, WITHOUT NOBODY BEIN' THE WISER!

RIGHT! AND WE'RE NOT TAKIN' ANY CHANCES OF THIS SHARPSHOOTER *NOT* OUTDRAWIN' THE SHERIFF! LISTEN, YORE STILL SORTA CHUMMY WITH THE OLD MAN, SO YORE GONNA PAY HIM A LITTLE VISIT BEFORE THE SHOOT-OUT...

AND WHILE THE TWO MEN PLAN...

NEVER THOUGHT I'D ACCEPT A JOB LIKE THIS! BUT WITH THAT KINDA MONEY, I CAN QUIT THE CIRCUS AND HEAD BACK HOME TO STAY!

BESIDES, WHAT'S *WRONG* WITH THIS JOB? IT'LL BE A FAIR SHOOT-OUT! IT WON'T BE LIKE I WAS KILLIN' 'IM IN COLD-BLOOD OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT! SO...

AWW, WHY AM I TRYIN' TUH KID MYSELF?? THIS AIN'T GONNA BE A FAIR FIGHT! I'M A BETTER GUNMAN THAN ANYONE IN THIS TERRITORY!

I THOUGHT I WAS A BETTER MAN THAN THIS, BUT FOR FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS, I'M...I'M GONNA DO THIS!

US

THE NEXT MORNING, LEWT CARLSON PAYS HIS VISIT TO SHERIFF MORGON...

IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME A MOMENT, LEWT! I'VE GOT ME SOME PAPERS TO MAKE OUT!

GO RIGHT AHEAD!

AFTER ALL, THIS IS THE CHANCE I WAS WAITIN' FER!

WANTED

WHILE OUT ON THE STREET, VANCE CURTIS, SANS HIS CIRCUS SUIT, DOES AS DUKE HAS INSTRUCTED...

BLAM BLAM BLAM

AND WITHOUT HIS COSTUME OR MASK, THE SHARPSHOOTER IS A STRANGER TO THE PEOPLE OF THREE FORKS...A TROUBLESOME STRANGER...

SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE'S GONE LOCO! HAND ME MY GUN, LEWT!

I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU, SHERIFF! HERE IT IS!

THE SHERIFF RUSHES OUT! THEN LEWT WALKS OUT AND DUKE IS THERE, WAITING FOR HIM!

DID YOU DO IT?

OF COURSE! EVERYTHING'S SET!

OKAY, COWBOY! CALM DOWN!

UH-OH! THIS IS IT!

VANCE STARTS FOR HIS GUN... THEN HESITATES IN A MOMENT OF INDECISION...

...AND FINALLY STOPS ALTOGETHER, AS HE REALIZES THAT HE JUST CAN'T DO IT!

THE SHERIFF IS LEFT COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF WHAT VANCE HAD BEEN PLANNING...

OKAY, COWBOY! YOU'VE HAD YORE FUN! NOW HAND OVER YER HARD- WARE!

HUH? WHA... WHAT WAS THAT?

I SAID HAND IT OVER!

YOU HEARD ME!

AND THIS 'LL TEACH YUH TUH DO WHAT I SAY ...THE *FIRST* TIME I SAY IT ...!

SLAM

UNGH!

THANKS, SHERIFF! THANKS FER GIVIN' ME CAUSE TUH MAKE MYSELF A BUNDLE!

WHAT'RE YUH TALKIN' ABOUT?

THE ONLY ANSWER THE SHERIFF RECEIVES IS A QUICK DRAW...

THE SHERIFF HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO FOLLOW SUIT, AND...

BLAM

THEN, AS THE SHERIFF FALLS... THE PAIN OF DEATH COURSING THROUGH HIS VEINS...HIS FINGER TIGHTENS ON THE TRIGGER, AND...

KLIK

STUNNED BY THE STRANGE SOUND OF THE SHERIFF'S GUN, THE SHARPSHOOTER SIMPLY STANDS, AS SPECTATORS ADVANCE...

THE SHERIFF'S IRON WASN'T LOADED!

THAT FELLA MUSTA KNOWED IT!

IT WAS A SET-UP JOB! HE PAID SOMEONE TUH UNLOAD IT ...TUH MAKE *SURE* HE'D WIN THE DUEL!

GRAB THE KILLER!

THEN...SUDDEN REALIZATION...

HEY! LET GO! WHY ARE YOU...

NO! WAIT! I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HIS GUN! I...

NO USE! THEY'D NEVER BELIEVE!

GOTTA BREAK AWAY! GIT BACK TO THE CIRCUS!

STRUGGLING FOR FREEDOM, VANCE FINALLY REACHES HIS HORSE...

AND...

SPLAT

THEY'RE MOUNTING UP, OL' GIRL ...BUT I THINK WE'RE FAR ENOUGH AHEAD NOW!

BAM BLAM

MINUTES LATER...

GOT TO GIT INSIDE BEFORE THEY COME OVER THE RISE AND SEE WHICH WAGON I WENT INTO!

ONCE I'M IN COSTUME I SHOULD BE SAFE! I DOUBT THAT THEY'D EVER SUSPECT THE SHARPSHOOTER OF DOING THIS!

WHEW, I'VE SURE BEEN PLAYED FER A PATSY! BUT MY TWO "EMPLOYERS" AIN'T GITTIN' AWAY WITH THIS!

I'M SUPPOSED TO MEET THEM IN AN HOUR... TUH GIT MY PAYMENT! BUT THEY AIN'T ONLY GONNA PAY ME... THEY'RE GONNA CLEAR MY NAME, TOO!

I'M GONNA MARCH 'EM IN TUH TOWN AND FORCE 'EM TUH TELL THE PEOPLE THE TRUTH...TELL 'EM THAT I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE SHERIFF'S GUN!

WHILE, BACK IN TOWN...

DO YUH THINK THEY'LL CATCH UP TUH HIM?

LET'S HOPE NOT! REMEMBER ...IF HE TELLS ANYONE WE HIRED 'IM, IT'LL RUIN OUR PLANS FER THIS TOWN!

BUT I DOUBT THAT WE NEED TUH WORRY! HE HAD TOO MUCH OF A HEAD START!

HEY, C'MON! IT'S GETTING LATE! WE'VE GOTTA GIT OVER TO THE OLD CRENSHAW PLACE AND SET UP FER THE... THE "PAY-OFF!"

AN HOUR LATER...

NO SIGN OF ANYONE! 'PEARS THEY PLAYED ME FOR A PATSY ALL THE... WAIT! WHAT'S THAT??

HEARING SOMEONE MOVING ABOUT BEHIND A NOT TOO DISTANT BOULDER, VANCE MOVES HIS HEAD JUST IN TIME!

ZING

AND HE'S OFF HIS HORSE BEFORE THE SECOND SHOT IS FIRED!

BLAM BLAM

SHOULDA FIGURED THEY'D PULL SOMETHING LIKE THIS!

THERE THEY ARE ...MY "EMPLOYERS!" AND ONE OF 'EM IS LEFT HISSELF WIDE OPEN!

THE SHARPSHOOTER SHOOTS ONLY TO WOUND, BUT LEWT MOVES AT THE LAST MOMENT, PRODUCING HIS OWN DEATH...

ZIP

GNNGH!

THEN...

THE OTHER'S HIGH-TAILIN' IT...RUNNIN' SCARED! I CAN'T *AFFORD* TUH SHOOT!

GOTTA TAKE 'IM ALIVE! HE'S MY *ONLY* CHANCE OF CLEARIN' MYSELF!

IT IS DUSK NOW AND THE FIGURE BEFORE VANCE IS BUT THE SILHOUETTE OF A PANICKING MAN WHO HASTILY, CLUMSILY CLIMBS UPON HIS HORSE! VANCE, TOO, MOUNTS UP...AND GIVES CHASE...

CAN'T LET HIM CATCH ME! I'VE GOT PLANS FER THIS TOWN AND NOBODY'S GONNA RUIN 'EM!

BLAM

BLAM

CONCENTRATING ON SHOOTING BACK AT VANCE, DUKE DOESN'T REALIZE THAT HE HAS RIDDEN DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO A PRECIPICE!

BLAM BAM BLAM

THEN FATE TAKES A HAND AS THE HORSE'S HOOF CATCHES IN A CHUCK HOLE...

NO-OOOO!!

AND...

OH, NO! IT CAN'T BE! IT...

HE COULD NEVER HAVE SURVIVED THAT!

NOW WHAT?? HE WAS MY ONLY CHANCE! DOES THIS MEAN I'LL HAVE TO REMAIN A FUGITIVE FROM NOW ON??!

SHOOTING A SHERIFF IS SOMETHING BIG! THEY'RE BOUND TO PUT A REWARD OUT FOR ME!

CAN'T GO BACK TO THE CIRCUS NOW! IT WOULDN'T BE *SAFE* TO BE IN THE LIMELIGHT ALL THE TIME... EVEN THOUGH I DO WEAR A MASK!

CONTINUED AFTER FOLLOWING PAGE

LUCKILY, NO ONE KNOWS I'M THE SHARPSHOOTER ! SO I GUESS I'LL JUST STAY DRESSED LIKE THIS...AND KEEP RIDING!

WHO KNOWS? MAYBE NOBODY GOT A GOOD ENOUGH LOOK AT ME TUH GIVE ANYONE A GOOD DESCRIP-TION...SO MAYBE ONCE I'M FAR ENOUGH AWAY, I'LL BE ABLE TO BECOME MYSELF AGAIN!

BUT ABOUT AN HOUR LATER, LONG AFTER VANCE HAS DISAPPEARED OVER THE HORIZON, A GROUP OF TOWNSPEOPLE, STILL SEARCHING FOR THE SHERIFF'S KILLER, COME UPON DUDE! AND MIRACULOUSLY A SPARK OF LIFE STILL REMAINS IN THE MAN...AS WELL AS A BITTER DESIRE FOR REVENGE...

LISTEN...HAVEN'T GOT...MUCH TIME...

I KNOW WHO...KILLED...THE SHERIFF! HIS NAME IS... VANCE CURTIS! HE'S ALSO... KNOWN AS...AS...

BUT BEFORE HE CAN SPEAK THOSE FATEFUL WORDS, DEATH TAKES ITS TOLL...

WONDER WHAT HE WAS GONNA SAY! AND HOW DID *HE* KNOW WHO THE KILL-ER WAS?

I DUNNO! BUT NOW AT LEAST WE KNOW THE GUY'S NAME! AND WE'VE *ALREADY* GOT A PRETTY GOOD DESCRIPTION!

DAYS HAVE PASSED AND VANCE CURTIS HAS RIDDEN FAR. BUT THE EFFECTS OF THE INCIDENT AT THREE FORKS ARE FAR REACH-ING...

UH-OH! THIS DESCRIPTION IS *TOO* GOOD! AND SOMEHOW THEY EVEN LEARNED MY NAME!

THAT CLINCHES IT! MY LIFE AS VANCE CURTIS IS OVER WITH! FROM NOW ON IT LOOKS LIKE MY *ONLY* LIFE IS AS THE SHARP-SHOOTER!

WANT

VANCE CURTI

THERE ARE MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS! VANCE DOESN'T EVEN KNOW WHY THIS ALL STARTED...WHY DUDE AND LEWT WANTED THE SHERIFF SHOT... AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HE WILL EVER KNOW!

BUT THE BIGGEST QUESTION DOESN'T LIE BEHIND THE SHARP-SHOOTER. IT LIES AHEAD! IN FACT, THE QUESTION IS...WHAT LIES AHEAD? WHAT SORT OF LIFE IS NOW IN STORE FOR THIS NEW MASKED GUNMAN?

THE END

THE HANGMAN'S WAITING

THIS WAS A MINING TOWN IN NEVADA IN 1867. THE GOLD-MINERS IN THE JURY HAD JUST BROUGHT IN A VERDICT OF "GUILTY!" AND THE PRISONER A TENDERFOOT FROM PHILADELPHIA, PA., WOULD SHORTLY BE TAKEN OUTSIDE AND HUNG! HE DIDN'T DENY HIS GUILT AND HE'D HAVE DIED WITHOUT A WORD IF ONE OF THE MINERS HADN'T ASKED A QUESTION..

THE PRISONER, LEO WARREN, IS GUILTY AS SIN! NUGGET RILEY'S GOT HIS ROPE AND WE..

HOLD IT, EGAN. THIS DUDE LOOKS PURTY SQUARE T' ME. I'D LIKE T' HEAR IT FROM HIM HOW COME HE WENT T' THE BAD.

B-1816

I BECAME A THIEF BECAUSE I WAS **A FOOL** IN THE FIRST PLACE.

WHAT'S THAT MEAN, WARREN?

MONTESSE-AIASCIA

WELL... FROM THE DAY I BOARDED THE STAGE OUT OF FAIRPLAY, I WAS THE VICTIM OF EVERY THIEF IN NEVADA

"MOST OF THE PEOPLE WERE ALL RIGHT BUT SOME WERE CONTEMPTUOUS BECAUSE I WAS SUCH A TENDERFOOT. SO WHEN A FELLOW PASSENGER BECAME FRIENDLY AND GAVE ME VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT LIFE IN A MINING TOWN, I WAS GRATEFUL!"

..AND KEEP AN EYE PEELED FOR SHARPERS. YOU CAN'T TRUST NOBODY NOWADAYS.

DON'T THINK JUST BECAUSE YOU AN' ME ARE HONEST THAT EVERYBODY ELSE IS LIKE US · NOSIREE!

HMMM. I SHALL BE ALERT. VERY ALERT FROM THIS POINT ON.

"IT WASN'T UNTIL THE STAGE ARRIVED HERE THAT I BECAME AWARE MY WALLET WAS GONE! I DIDN'T ACCUSE ANYONE SPECIFICALLY BUT..."

MY WALLET IS GONE! YOU WERE SITTING NEXT TO ME, SIR! YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE WHO...

IF YUH FINISH THAT SENTENCE, DUDE, I'LL PUT A BULLET IN YOUR HEAD!

WATCH IT, TENDERFOOT! ACCUSIN' A MAN OUT HERE IS INVITIN' **THE UNDERTAKER!**

LIQUORS

THIS IS TUH TEACH YA **A LESSON!**

THUD

"I LAID THERE IN THE RAIN FOR HOURS. I MIGHT'VE BEEN **DEAD** FOR ALL ANYONE CARED THAT WAS MY INTRODUCTION TO THIS TOWN!"

YOU! YOU WITH THE HAT! **IT'S MINE!**

YOU CAN'T PROVE IT DUDE LAY BACK DOWN IN THE MUD BEFORE I KNOCK YOU DOWN!

"JETHRO STACY LET ME SLEEP IN A HORSE STALL THAT NIGHT. MY HOPES WERE GONE. MY FAITH IN MY FELLOW MAN DESTROYED.. BUT I WAS RESOLVED TO MAKE GOOD!"

Z Z Z Z

"I WORKED HARDER THAN ANY MINER OUT HERE I PROSPECTED FROM BEFORE DAWN TILL AFTER DARK. I SLEPT BESIDE THE PICK AND SHOVEL..

HA HA HA HA! THERE AIN'T NO GOLD WITHIN **A MILE** O' HERE!

HE'S THE JOKE O' THE CAMP MIKE. LET HIM BE.

MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT. I HAVEN'T FOUND ANY GOLD YE... WHAT'S THIS? THE PICK'S STUCK RIGHT IN THE ROCK!

IT...IT'S **GOLD! A HUGE SOLID GOLD NUGGET!**

I'VE STRUCK IT RICH!

"THE ECHOES WERE STILL BOUNCING OFF THE PEAKS AS I SHOUTED OUT THE NEWS WHEN SOMETHING HIT ME ON THE HEAD!"

WH-WHAT HAPPENED? I...I FOUND THE NUGGET... I WAS SHOUTING WHEN... WHEN

OH, NO!

STAKE THE CLAIM RIGHT, MIKE! IT'S GOIN' TO MAKE US BOTH MILLIONAIRES! LUCKY WE ARE WE FOUND THAT NUGGET TOGETHER, WASN'T IT?

THEY'RE STEALING MY CLAIM.

THERE ARE NO WITNESSES THERE IS NO WAY FOR ME TO PROVE IT'S MINE.

"I WORKED FOR DAY WAGES AFTER THAT! I BARELY MADE ENOUGH TO KEEP ALIVE. THAT FIRST WEEK, I STARVED... BUT THE THOUGHT OF GETTING PAID AND THEN BUYING FOOD AND WARM CLOTHING KEPT ME GOING!"

SWING THEM SHOVELS OR GIT OFF THE JOB! YOU, DUDE, I'M DOCKIN' YUH A DAY'S WAGES FOR WORKIN' TOO SLOW! **SPEED IT UP!**

I CAN BARELY STAND UP STRAIGHT MUCH LESS WORK FASTER!

I'LL GET A WARM COAT AND... GLOVES. AND FOOD I'LL COOK MYSELF!

RUMBULL
RADING POST
2. GALLANT...

I FIGURE THAT'S ABOUT ONE DOLLAR NINETY-SEVEN CENTS, MISTER.

IT'LL BE *THREE DOLLARS* EVEN, MISTER!

B-BUT I ONLY EARNED *FOUR* DOLLARS. HOW CAN I LIVE?

GIT OUTTA HERE, TENDERFOOT. IF YOU DON'T LIKE MY PRICES, GO **SOMEWHERE ELSE!**

"THIS WAS THE NIGHT WHEN I WENT WRONG. THE FLOUR I GOT FOR MY WEEKS PAY WAS MOLDY AND BAD. THE JACKET WAS NO GOOD... AND BITTERNESS WAS EATING AT ME LIKE ACID!"

I NEED A GUN!

"HAIRLESS MIKE OFFERED ME MY OPPORTUNITY. HAIRLESS MIKE WHO GOT $470 FOR MY NUGGET AND WAS NOW GROWING RICH ON MY CLAIM! I CALLED TO HIM FROM THE DARKNESS..."

WHO'S THAT? WHADDYA WANT?

WANTED

THE DU...

OOOFF!

THAT WAS EASY! MMMM. TO FIRE THIS GUN, I'VE GOT TO PULL BACK THE HAMMER TO COCK IT, THEN PULL THE TRIGGER! THAT'S ALL I NEED TO KNOW!

SALOON

"NEXT VICTIM... THE GENT WHO STOLE MY WALLET ON THE STAGE AND KNOCKED ME DOWN WITH HIS GUNBUTT!"

THUD!

"I ROBBED OFTEN IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS. I ROBBED THE THIEVES WHO LIVED ON FOOLS LIKE ME AND OTHERS IN THIS CAMP! FOR THIS YOU SAY I SHALL HANG. YOU MEMBERS OF THE JURY...

FIVE OF WHOM WERE MY VICTIMS. THE JUDGE OWNS THE STORE WHICH CHARGES TOO MUCH! YOU SAY I SHALL HANG...

SAY THE WORD, MR. WARREN. WE'LL CLEAN OUT THE WHOLE NEST O' COYOTES!

I DON'T GET THIS. WHY ARE THEY DEFENDING YOU?

MR. WARREN SPEND THE MONEY HE STOLE ON US DOWN-AN'-OUTERS! NOW, WE'RE GONNA HOLD AN ELECTION. WHEN IT'S OVER, MR. WARREN'LL BE THE SHERIFF AN' CROOKS LIKE YOU WILL BE EITHER LONG GONE OR IN JAIL!

THANKS, BOYS.

END

BLOOD CANYON

IT WAS A PEACEFUL, GREEN SLOPED CANYON, TUCKED AWAY IN THE NEVADA HILLS... STRAY CATTLE AND A FEW WILD HORSES COULD ALWAYS BE SEEN FORAGING IT'S GROWTH... OR DRINKING FROM ITS COOL STREAM...

BLOOD CANYON IT WAS CALLED... FOR NOT LONG AGO IT WAS THE HIDEOUT FOR RINGO WELLS' MEN... THE MEANEST BUNCH EVER TO SET FOOT IN NEVADA TERRITORY...

YA-HOO...!

THE CANYON WAS IDEALLY HIDDEN FROM UNWANTED EYES... HERE, THE RUTHLESS GANG COULD REST, DIVY UP THEIR LOOT, AND CAROUSE TO THEIR HEARTS CONTENT!...

BUT OTHERS WANTED TO TAKE OVER THE CANYON!...

THIS IS IT, MEN! LET'S GO AN' TAKE IT AWAY FROM 'EM.!

FOR HOURS THE FIGHTING CONTINUED!... BLOOD RAN LIKE WATER!... AND WHEN THE DUST SETTLED, NOT A MAN WAS ALIVE!!... BLOOD CANYON IT WAS CALLED... AND RIGHTLY SO!...

END